

# News



New Jersey  
**Office of the Attorney General**

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LAW & PUBLIC SAFETY

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**For Immediate Release:**

November 21, 2008

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**New Jersey Named as the Annie E. Casey Foundation's First Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Model State**

**- Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Lowers Average Daily Population in Juvenile Detention by 42 Percent, Improves Public Safety -**

**Trenton --** New Jersey will serve as the first Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) state model site in the country, Attorney General Anne Milgram and New Jersey Chief Justice Stuart Rabner announced today. JDAI is currently being implemented in more than 100 jurisdictions nationally at both the state and county level. As the first JDAI state model site, New Jersey will provide jurisdictions with an example of how to implement juvenile justice system reform successfully.

The State will host delegations from around the country seeking assistance in planning statewide juvenile justice system reform. JDAI was started by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 1992 to address the fact that young people are often unnecessarily detained, with long-lasting negative consequences for both public safety and youth development.

Bart Lubow, the director of programs for high risk youth at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, joined Attorney General Milgram, Chief Justice Rabner, Juvenile Justice Commission Executive Director Veleria N. Lawson, Assistant Public Defender Cynthia Samuels, and state and county JDAI Steering Committee members for the official announcement, which was held today at the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex.

"New Jersey has distinguished itself among the 25 JDAI states through outstanding results and a thoughtful approach to spreading detention reform statewide," Lubow said. "No other state has built as impressive an infrastructure to stimulate change at the county level, nor mobilized as much political and administrative support. We are excited that New Jersey will serve as a learning laboratory for these other states."

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"New Jerseyans have reason to be proud that our state will serve as a model JDAI site for the nation," Chief Justice Rabner said. "As we meet with people from around the country to discuss our successful approach to reducing the number of youths in detention, we are rejuvenated in our efforts to implement this program statewide."

"The goal of JDAI is to ensure that serious and chronic youthful offenders are detained, while effective alternatives are available for other youth who can be safely supervised in the community while awaiting their final court disposition," Milgram said. "As a result of New Jersey's participation in JDAI, New Jersey has successfully reduced the use of secure juvenile detention by 42 percent while increasing public safety and maintaining court appearance rates."

JDAI is a joint initiative of the New Jersey Judiciary, the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC), and numerous state and county agencies that work to safely reduce the unnecessary use of secure detention for youth. As the agency leading the implementation of JDAI, the JJC has worked in partnership with the Judiciary and other state and local agencies to guide the Initiative. Each participating county has a local steering committee that relies on collaboration, leadership and data collection to improve juvenile justice system policy, practice and outcomes.

"Today, as a result of a true partnership, New Jersey's juvenile justice system is undergoing a transformation. While there is still more work to do, we are very pleased that our success so far has been recognized," said JJC Executive Director Lawson. "We are truly honored to be named as the first model state for the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative."

"The harmful effects and long term consequences of removing children from their homes, their communities and their schools are well documented. As a member of the JDAI State Steering Committee, I am pleased at the level of dedication and commitment of juvenile justice stakeholders in New Jersey to the collaborative process that is essential to success in detention reform," Assistant Public Defender Cynthia Samuels said. "The Office of the Public Defender is excited to be a part of this ongoing process to reduce New Jersey's over-reliance on the use of secure detention for those children who can safely remain in the community while their cases are being resolved. I hope that New Jersey's experience as a replication site will inspire and help other states to do the same."

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is headquartered in Baltimore, MD, and is one of the largest private foundations in the nation dedicated to fostering public policies, human service reforms and community support that meet the needs of vulnerable children and families. JDAI seeks to help youth involved in juvenile justice systems to develop into healthy, productive adults through policies and programs that maximize their chance for success, reduce the likelihood of incarceration, and minimize the risk they pose to their communities.

The JJC receives \$200,000 annually from the Casey Foundation to implement JDAI. An additional \$100,000 will be provided to the JJC this year to establish New Jersey as a model state site. The JJC will continue to receive additional funding to finance costs associated with this distinction.

The Initiative in New Jersey is an important part of the Governor's Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods. The strategy focuses on enforcement, prevention and prisoner re-entry programs. The prevention strategies stress the need to take coordinated, active steps to prevent juvenile delinquency and to intervene in delinquency through the use of model programs such as JDAI.

The Initiative began in 2004 in New Jersey with five pilot sites in Atlantic, Camden, Essex, Hudson and Monmouth counties, and expanded in 2006 to Bergen, Burlington, Mercer, Ocean and Union counties. It is expected to expand to all counties operating detention centers by 2010.

Significant reductions in admissions and length of stay, primarily for minority youth, have been achieved in the five pilot sites. Comparing 2003 to 2007, on any given day in the initial sites of Atlantic, Camden, Essex, Hudson and Monmouth, there were 211 fewer youth in detention, representing a 42 percent reduction. Of these, on any day there were 189 fewer youth of color in detention, a 40.7 percent reduction.

The number of minority youth in detention has been cut in half in Camden (-50.1 percent) and in Essex (-47.5 percent). The initiative has also leveled the playing field in JDAI sites in regard to length of stay in detention, bringing minority and non-minority youth significantly closer in terms of average stays than prior to the implementation of JDAI.

Public safety has also improved during this same timeframe. In the five pilot counties, total juvenile arrests have declined 9.4 percent since 2003. Arrests for index offenses, the most accurately reported crime, have also been reduced since 2003 by 9.6 percent.

More information on JDAI is available at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Detailed information on New Jersey's JDAI efforts, including the 2007 JDAI Annual Report and a list of JDAI State Steering Committee partners can be found at [http://www.nj.gov/oag/jjc/localized\\_programs.html](http://www.nj.gov/oag/jjc/localized_programs.html).

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